

**James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, April 3, 1781.
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TO THOMAS JEFFERSON.¹

¹ From the Madison Papers (1840).

Philadelphia, April 3rd, 1781.

Dear Sir, —The letter from the Delegation, by the last post, informed you of the arrival of the stores here, which were to have been delivered in Virginia by one of the French ships. The infinite importance of them to the State, especially since the arrival of a reinforcement to Arnold,² of which we are just apprized by the

Marquis, has determined the Delegates to forward them by land, without loss of time. This will be attempted in the first instance, in the

² The sufferings in Virginia from the invasion of the enemy called forth the following peculiar proposition from George Mason. It was addressed to the Virginia delegates in Congress:

Virginia, Gunston-Hall, April 3d., 1781.

Gentlemen,—

Whoever considers the Importance of the Trade of these States to Great Britain, and her Expectations of great part of it returning into British Channels, upon a peace, may

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readily conceive that She will be alarmed at any Measures which may affect it hereafter, by imposing such Burdens upon it, as will give a lasting Preference to other Nations. If therefore Congress were to recommend to the Legislatures of the different States immediately to enact Laws, declaring that all private property, which hath been, or shall be plundered or destroyed, by the British Troops, or others acting under the authority of the King of Great Britain, beyond high water mark, from a certain Day, shall be hereafter reimbursed & made good to the individual Sufferers, & their Heirs, by Dutys to be imposed upon all Imports from Great Britain into the respective States, after a peace, and to be continued until full Reparation shall be accordingly made; and for this purpose, directing Valuations, upon oath, to be made of all private property so plundered or destroyed, to be returned, with the names & places of abode of the owners, to some certain public office within each State, & there duly registered, it is more than probable it wou'd produce good effects.— *Mad. MSS.*

channel of the Quartermaster's department, and, if it cannot be effected in that mode, without delay, we propose to engage private wagons for the purpose, on the credit of the State. Should the latter alternative be embraced, I find it will be necessary to stipulate instantaneous payment, from the Treasury, on the arrival of the wagons at Richmond, in specie or *old continental currency* to the *real* amount thereof. I mention this circumstance that you may be prepared for it. The expense of the transportation will be between five and six hundred pounds, Virginia money. The exchange between specie and the old paper, at present, is about one hundred and thirty-five for one.

The Delegates having understood that the refugees taken by Captain Tilley, on his return to Newport from the Chesapeake, consisted chiefly of persons who formerly lived in Virginia, some of whom were traitors who deserved exemplary punishment, and others vindictive enemies to the State, thought proper to make the inclosed application to the French Minister. By conversation I have since had with him on the subject, I doubt whether it will be deemed consistent with their general rules of conduct, to give up, to be punished as malefactors, any of the captives made by their fleet, which does not serve, like their

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land army, as an auxiliary to the forces of the United States. If these persons had been taken by their land forces, which serve as auxiliaries under the Commander-in-Chief, it seems there would have been no difficulty in the case. However, the application will certainly prevent the exchange or release to which it refers, if the Executive think it expedient to do so. On the least intimation, I am persuaded the apostates would be even sent over to France, and secured in the most effectual manner during the war. Perhaps this would not be amiss, as being not our prisoners, no use can be made of them in redeeming our citizens from captivity.